



*Talking Vrouz* (Arc, 2013), Susan Wicks's second book-length translation of work by the French poet, Valérie Rouzeau, won the 2014 Oxford-Weidenfeld Prize for Literary Translation.

Her own sixth collection, *House of Tongues* (Bloodaxe, 2011) was a PBS Recommendation, as is her latest collection (Bloodaxe, 2016), *The Months*, from which the poem below (now titled *They*) is taken.

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### Shades

They are everywhere along the harbour-front,  
the little cats, ears pricked, their legs  
as delicate as sticks, the little feline faces  
heart-shaped, rippled like sand or feathers,  
big eyes flashing yellow in the dark.

They pad from place to place,  
pour their shadow-bodies from the sanded wood  
of the taverna's deck onto the beach  
to wrap themselves around the plastic legs  
of tables, begging to be fed.

Lean down to stroke them, and you almost drown  
in purring: up here we're eating fish  
or chicken, calamari, fruit,  
while under us the sand is steadily lapped clean,  
every last crumb, as if we've never lived.

Last thing, when the restaurants are closing,  
the cats still slink along  
under the loungers, pour themselves from deep  
shadow to shadow, the whole harbour black  
except for floating stars, that sudden light

beyond the jetty as the sea  
bares its white teeth. The little cats  
escape to sleep our human diet off in shade  
almost unnoticed, almost replete.

**SUSAN WICKS, *The Months*, at Bloodaxe Books:**

<http://www.bloodaxebooks.com/ecs/product/the-months-1114>